

Substance Abuse, Drug Trafficking, Theft and Violence in the Workplace

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“Towards a healthier workplace, in search of better practices.” This is an excellent subject for a conference. It is also very timely, given the violence, increasing thefts, and other criminal elements, including drugs and gangs, that are prevalent in many corporations today. I applaud this effort and especially the leadership and staff of the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention for organizing this conference.

First, let me provide you a little information about my company. First Chicago NBD is the eighth largest bank in the United States. We have 35,000 employees and approximately \$125 billion in total assets. Two weeks from now we'll be merging with Bank One, and we will have approximately 105,000 employees and become the fifth largest bank in the United States.

As the Director of Corporate Security for First Chicago NBD, my primary responsibility is to ensure and maintain a safe and secure workplace for all of our employees, and protect the assets of the corporation. We also have the responsibility to develop a security program to protect the bank against civil lawsuits alleging inadequate or negligent security.

Substance abuse, gangs, theft, and violence in the workplace. That's a lot of ground to cover during the time we have available today, so buckle your seatbelts and hang on.

In 1997, drug abuse cost corporate America \$85 billion. In Illinois alone, the loss was over \$4 million. In my hometown, Chicago, employers spent \$1.3 million, as a result of drug abuse within the workplace.

Now, let's talk about some of the facts as we know them today. First, the Department of Labor suggests that drug abuse costs employers \$9,600 per drug-abusing employee. They also report that 65 percent of accidents that occur in the workplace are related to substance

abuse. The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) reports that 80 percent of all thefts within the workplace have some relationship to drug abuse.

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 70 percent of illicit drug users are employed. They also report that half the employees who test positive state that they use drugs daily. This obviously reduces productivity and employee morale, and also drives up health costs.

Why do gang members find the workplace a safe haven for illegal activity? Gang members bring with them a lot of baggage, including drug trafficking, drug usage, recruiting employees, theft and other criminal activity.

Why has this phenomenon taken place? Several reasons are suggested: First, there's a high comfort level within the workplace, unlike the urban environment where there's the constant threat of pressure from law enforcement authorities, police informants, neighborhood associations, etc. Within a corporation, gang members have the freedom to move throughout the organization without the constant fear of rival gangs and other competitors. They also have the opportunity to interact with potential recruits and/or customers of their illicit drug trafficking activities.

Also, there is little potential for detection or supervision within the workplace. The majority of gang members who go into the workplace apply for areas or positions where there normally is little or no supervision. For example: shipping and receiving, the mail department, security, and other support or service positions. They are able to perform various criminal acts in the absence of close supervision. Also, most employees routinely put blinders on. They just don't want to be involved for various reasons, such as inconvenience, fear of reprisals or retaliation, and reluctance to become a witness in a court of law. Gang members and drug abusers are able to safely maneuver within the workplace environment by knowing who and what areas to avoid.

Enabling is also common. Unsuspecting employees often provide gang members the opportunity to conduct illegal activities. Gang members are difficult to detect; they look like any other employee.

Why do gang members go into the workplace? Benefits and health care are very important to gang members. Oftentimes they will fake an accident to receive Workers' Compensation, which constitutes fraud. In addition, if they've got medical problems or if they get injured on the job in any way, they've now got corporate benefits to take care of them.

Gang members are also attracted to the large inventories of various types of merchandise in corporations. Theft opportunities abound, especially in companies like banks, where the primary merchandise is money; in hospitals where large quantities of drugs are stored; and in retail stores. So the opportunity for office and building theft is very real. Gang members also routinely go into the workplace to traffic in drugs.

Management within a large Midwestern company suspected they had a significant drug trafficking problem. But they didn't know exactly where it was occurring. They hired a security consulting firm to investigate the matter. A plainclothes, undercover operative was subsequently assigned to the maintenance department, which is where management suspected the drug trafficking was occurring.

The operative found that not only were a few of the maintenance workers involved, but that they were part of an organized local gang. It was also discovered that the supervisor was part of the gang. The drugs were being delivered to the company by a truck driver that sold coffee and donuts in the parking lot every day. The gang members were also stealing merchandise from the company and delivering it to the truck driver, who then removed the stolen merchandise from the property. So if you notice strange trucks or vendors frequenting the company parking lot, be aware they may not be there just sell donuts and coffee.

Another incident of note involving gangs and drugs occurred in a local hospital. The hospital

routinely hired various members of a local gang. One day the leader of a rival gang was shot and was brought to the hospital for emergency care. Because he was a member of a rival gang, the gang members that were also hospital employees decided to go up to his room and dispose of him. Fortunately, the plan was somehow detected by law enforcement authorities, who rushed to the hospital and, with the help of the hospital security staff, were successful in preventing the incident from occurring.

The gang members in the hospital were concerned because the rival gang leader had been trying to get some of his own members into the hospital as employees. Their goal was to set up drug trafficking within the hospital and recruit gang members. The current gang employees were simply acting to protect their turf.

So, how can you detect a gang member from anybody else in the workplace? They have traded in their Raiders jackets for two- and three-piece suits. Now they dress just like you and me. They blend right in with the rest of the employee population. Their very presence in the workplace, however, puts other employees at risk.

Why should employers be concerned about gang members and drugs within the workplace?

1. In 1997, over 6 million employees were threatened in the workplace and intimidated by gang members.
2. There is also very aggressive recruitment activity engineered by gang members once they get inside the organization.
3. Gang members frequently come to work high on drugs. They are more prone to have an accident or cause other employees to have accidents.
4. By not adequately performing their part of an activity or process, they might create an unsafe condition for other workers who are depending on them.
5. In addition, gang members' work productivity is going to decrease because they're not physically or emotionally able or motivated to focus on their jobs.
6. Because they need cash to finance their drug habit, thefts and other criminal activity

will increase.

7. The morale of other employees will be negatively impacted because they will be required to do more than their share of the work.

There's an OSHA regulation that requires employers to maintain a safe and secure environment for employees. Failure to honor this means the employer could actually be sued for inadequate or negligent security. That could cost the corporation millions of dollars. Negative publicity and loss of corporate goodwill could also result.

There's also a legal duty to protect customers and other invited guests on your property. Failure to do so could result in heavy civil suits for the corporation, and possibly criminal charges.

Violence in the workplace continues to be a reality. One of the scary things about gangs is the randomness of their actions. They don't consider the consequences of their actions; they are very impulsive, they act very quickly, and they create situations that are dangerous and inherently unsafe.

Are employees or gang members at your firm abusing or trafficking in drugs? For most of us, the obvious answer is yes, especially considering the Department of Health and Human Services report that 70 percent of illicit drug users are employed. Your answers to the following questions could be an indicator:

1. Is your company experiencing a significant and unexplained increase in office thefts?
2. Are there more strangers in or lurking around your buildings? And if so, what are they doing there? What about coffee and donut vendors or sandwich trucks suddenly appearing in the company parking lots?
3. Is there a recent and unexplained increase in personal accidents on the job? That's a very telling sign.

4. What about employee claims for Workers' Compensation? Are they increasing significantly? And if so, why? If there's no apparent reason or logical explanation, it could signal that illicit drugs are being abused by your employees.
5. Is there a rise in absenteeism? Drug users are obviously going to have bad days. They will frequently wake up some mornings and not feel like coming to work.
6. Are you receiving more complaints about the quality of the service that you provide? Are customers asking: What's going on? What's happening here? What kind of people are you hiring? Why can't you get the work done any better? Why don't I receive my product on time?, etc. Obviously, employees who are impaired are not going to be as sharp, or as dedicated, or motivated, to perform their duties as they would be otherwise.

If the answer to one or more of the above questions is yes, what are we to do about it? First, I would suggest that you develop an anti-drug prevention and awareness program within your corporations. Create a drug-free workplace. At First Chicago NBD, we worked very closely with our medical staff, especially the Director of the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and the HR Department, to enhance protective factors such as pre-employment screening, background checks, pre-employment drug testing, and reduce risk factors such as poor access controls and inventory procedures. If you can deter or prevent a crime from occurring in the first place, it's much cheaper, better, and safer for everyone than to try to correct a problem once it has become prevalent or epidemic.

Second, provide in-service training and awareness programs to help employees develop skills to resist drugs, strengthen personal commitment, and increase social competency. Third, drug education and awareness programs should be long term and family-focused.

These programs will prove to be cost-effective as the cost of healthcare and Workers' Compensation claims decline, employee morale improves, thefts and other criminal incidents decrease, productivity increases, and customer expectations are being met.

All drug abuse must be targeted, not just marijuana, but also alcohol and any other kind of drug that might be abused by employees. We must have a total holistic prevention program on drug abuse. We must also encourage our employees and help them develop skills to resist the temptation to engage in drug use, to strengthen their personal commitment, and increase their social competency.

The following specific actions are recommended:

1. Develop a comprehensive pre-employment screening program, including pre-employment drug testing (80 percent of current workforce are not tested); pre-employment fingerprint and background criminal history checks, and written employment applications; and carefully review the results to detect gaps in the work history. If there are gaps in the application, determine why those gaps exist. Oftentimes, it will be because the applicant was incarcerated in prison. Specifically ask about previous criminal convictions on the written application. Also indicate on the form that a pre-employment drug test will be required. Finally, check authenticity of all degrees, certifications, etc.
2. Develop a drug-free workplace policy. Institute a zero-tolerance program for drugs. Insure that the policy is effectively communicated to all new employees during their orientation process, as well as during in-service training and awareness programs.
3. Develop a comprehensive EAP program, one that has the employee's best interest at heart. The program should focus on training managers to be alert for troubled employees. If observed, the employee should be referred to the attention of the EAP staff. This may help to assist the employee in getting through his/her problem.
4. Institute new employee security orientation and in-service employee training and awareness crime prevention programs.
5. Ensure that company policy is designed to vigorously prosecute all offenders. This will send out a positive message to employees and potential offenders of the company's resolve to enforce corporate policy.

Now, what are the benefits of these crime prevention actions?

1. Training provides increased awareness and education on dangers of drugs and gangs in the workplace; employees can actively assist the security staff in detecting use and trafficking of drugs in the workplace.

- Employee crime prevention councils promote partnerships between employees and security by sharing information, exchanging ideas, and working together to design improved security controls and increase the safety and security of the work areas.
- A program to enlist the support of employees in helping to increase awareness, deter, detect, or prevent crime in the workplace will expand the reach and improve the effectiveness of the corporate security programs. Rewards can be provided to employees that provide information that helps to prevent the commission of a crime or leads to the identification of an offender or the recovery of corporate assets.

2. Vigorously prosecute offenders. This sends a clear warning to potential offenders as to the corporation's resolve to prevent crime and punish offenders to the full extent of the law, and will also ensure that offenders will have a permanent criminal record, rather than just being fired and passed off to the next unsuspecting employer.

It has been an honor and a pleasure to share information with you on these very real problems of gangs, theft, violence, and drugs in the workplace. I compliment you and the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention on your important undertaking in working towards the creation of a healthier workplace. I wish you success in your various study and research projects.

Q I know gang members look like you and me, but is there a particular age range, or are males or females more likely to be in gangs?

A What we see in the Chicago area is that the majority of the gang members are male. Most gangs tend to have females within their groups. As far as the infiltration into corporate America, I'm not sure of the ratio of gang members between males and females.

The female gang members are normally in more skilled and sophisticated jobs. Most are in computer operations, clerical, and cash handling positions.

Male gang members are mostly in lower paying, poorly or unsupervised jobs such as in shipping and receiving, mail rooms, and transportation.

Q May I ask you about the statistic from OSHA, that 65 percent of accidents on the job are related to substance abuse? Do you know offhand when and where that study was done, or where I could get a copy of that?

A I think that particular study was done in 1995, if I remember, and I do have a copy of it. If you'll give me your card, I will fax it to you.